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Lyndon Johnson Is 10 Feet Tall

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WASHINGTON.

LIKE the old-time Texas cattle barons on their vast domains, Lyndon Baines Johnson seems to stand a good 20 feet tall in these parts. There is nothing in the capital that can look down on him except the Washington Monument.

The inevitable—and in this case, ironic—result of that is that everything at Mr. Johnson's feet looks smaller than it really is. In 18 months as President, he has made most of the institutions of Washington look like pygmies, and it is sometimes hard for the public to grasp that there is anyone in the Johnson Administration but a man named Johnson.

That is ironic because no President in decades has worked so hard to bring Congress into working partnership, because Mr. Johnson has passed out more operational authority to Cabinet members than, for instance, John F. Kennedy did, and because he places more reliance in some ways upon important advisers and staff members than many of his predecessors did. It is ironic, too, because of his unflagging efforts to bring both Government and private interests under "one great tent" of cooperation and consensus.

The Johnson formula of leadership does not, therefore, prescribe a one-man band. But the President's personality and force make it inevitable that everything he does is a star performance. He dominates any room by walking into it and any conference by taking his seat. "Power is," he once said, "where power goes"; and his Presidency has demonstrated that where his kind of power goes, so do all eyes. No matter what the formula, in this Administration it is Lyndon B. Johnson front and center, Lyndon B. Johnson speaking out, Lyndon B. Johnson getting the credit—and not infrequently the blame.

How the process of Johnsonizing the activities of this Administration works was never better illustrated than on one quiet Saturday morning at the White House in August of last year. Ranger 7 had just hit the moon, sending back 4,316 high-quality photos of proposed lunar landing surface, and a selection of the pictures had been brought in for Mr. Johnson's contemplation—whereupon, the most accomplished pitchman in White House history rose to heights perhaps unequaled since P. T. Barnum first gazed upon the Siamese Twins.

First, the President ordered the showing to proceed in the Cabinet room before an audience of reporters and photographers. Then he hitched his own chair so close to the movie screen that the photographers could not take pictures of it without taking his, too. When the showing was finished, Mr. Johnson wasted scarcely a moment in technical discussion of what he had seen. With an instinct as sure as the rocket's radio guidance, he put the occasion to work for him.

"Are you satisfied with the return on that investment?" Mr. Johnson demanded of Dr. Homer E. Newell, an associate administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Dr. Newell said he was "delighted."

"Elated?" Mr. Johnson prompted.

"Elated," Dr. Newell conceded.

Did the Ranger "adventure," the President next inquired, leave any doubt whatsoever about the desirability of going to the moon (a project then under fire by such important critics as Barry M. Goldwater and Dwight D. Eisenhower)?

"Not in my mind, not at all," Dr. Newell was happy to say. "I would feel that we were backing down from a real challenge, the kind we've never backed down from before."

"So what?" Mr. Johnson said, none too patiently.

"We would lose leadership," Dr. Newell suggested.

"In the world?"

"In the world."

"Do you think we can be first in the world and second in space?" Mr. Johnson demanded expectantly.

"No, sir," Dr. Newell said, recoiling from the very idea.

All the while, of course, cameras were clicking and reporters were scribbling. Later, a NASA official said the President—not just Ranger 7—had made the biggest publicity breakthrough for the moon program since its inception.

AN achievement like the Ranger's can't be overshadowed entirely even by a President. The prime victim in this case was Dr. Newell. Answering the Johnson catechism like a schoolboy, he could hardly be recognized as the able scientist and important administrator that he is.

Mr. Johnson's constant overshadowing of all the men and works of his Administration results to a great extent from his real and direct personal involvement. Nowhere is this more true than in his conduct of foreign policy — and never was the impact of his own judgment and personality greater than in his quick and forceful intervention in the Dominican Republic's chaotic affairs. Not even the second most powerful man in the Johnson Administration, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, seems to have had much to say about that.

How much was Mr. Johnson's decision to send 400 marines to Santo Domingo (on Wednesday, April 28) based on a desire to save American lives, and how much on intelligence reports that a Communist take-over threatened the Dominican Republic?

"Only Lyndon Johnson could tell you that," one of his most influential assistants says. "Undoubtedly, there was some of one and some of the other. But

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